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flame, and a deep hole is made in the ice, which is found to contain a solution of pot-ash.

*Theory.*—The phenomena seem to depend on the strong attraction of the potassium for oxygen; and of the potash for water. The heat which arises from two causes, decomposition and combination, is sufficiently intense to produce inflammation. The production of alkali in the decomposition of water by potassium, is shown by dropping a globule of it upon moistened paper, tinged with turmeric. At the moment that the globule comes into contact with the water it burns, and moves rapidly upon the paper, as if in search of moisture, leaving behind it a deep reddish brown trace, and acting upon the paper as dry caustic potash.

So strong is the attraction of potash for oxygen, and so great the energy of its action upon water, that it discovers and decomposes the small quantities of water contained in alcohol and ether. Potash is insoluble in ether, but when potassium, the basis, is thrown into it, oxygen is furnished, and hydrogen gas is disengaged, and the alkali, as it forms, renders the ether white and turbid. In ether and alcohol, the energy of its action is proportioned to the quantity of water they contain, and hydrogen and pot-ash are the constant result. Potassium thrown into solutions of the mineral acids, inflames and burns on the surface. It readily combines with the simple and inflammable solids, and with metals, with phosphorus and sulphur, forming compounds similar to the metallic phosphurets and sulphurets. When it is brought into contact with a piece of phosphorus, and pressed upon, there is a considerable action; they become fluid together, burn, and produce phosphate of pot-ash. When potassium is brought into contact with sulphur in fusion in the atmosphere, a great inflammation takes place, and sulphuret of potash is formed. The sulphuretted basis becomes oxygenated by exposure to the air, and is finally converted into sulphate. When one part of potassium is added to eight or ten parts of mercury, at about 60° of Fahrenheit, they instantly unite, and form a substance like mercury in colour, but less coherent, and small portions of it appear

as flattened spheres. When a globule is made to touch a globule of mercury about twice as large, they combine with heat; the compound is fluid at the temperature of its formation, but when cool it appears as a solid metal, similar in colour to silver. If the potassium be still increased, the amalgam becomes harder and brittle. When the proportions are one of potassium to seventy of mercury, the amalgam is soft and malleable. If the compounds are exposed to air, they rapidly absorb oxygen; potash which deliquesces is formed, and in a few minutes the mercury is found pure and unaltered.—When a globule of amalgam is thrown into water, it rapidly decomposes it, with a hissing noise; potash is formed, pure hydrogen is disengaged, and the mercury remains free. The action of potassium upon the inflammable oily compound bodies, confirms the other facts of the strength of its attraction for oxygen. On recently distilled naphtha that has been exposed to the air, it soon oxydates, and alkali is formed, which unites with the naphtha into a brown soap that collects round the globule. On concrete and fixed oils, when heated, it acts slowly, coaly matter is deposited, a little gas is evolved, and a soap is formed. By heat it rapidly decomposes the volatile oils.

Potassium readily reduces metallic oxydes when heated in contact with them; it decomposes readily flint and green glass with a gentle heat; alkali is immediately formed by oxygen from the oxydes, which dissolves the glass, and a new surface is soon exposed to the agent.

We shall in our next give a more detailed account of the decomposition of soda.

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*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

PARAMYTHIA; FROM THE GERMAN OF HERDER.

THE following fables from the Greek mythology, which have already appeared in the Monthly Repository of Theology, seem to possess sufficient merit to recommend them to the perusal of the readers of our Miscellany.—They are taken from the *Zersheute Blätter*, and are introduced with the following remarks.

Herder says he has called them *Paramythia* in imitation of the modern Greeks, who according to *Guyen*, gives this term to the tales and fables, in the relation of which they pass away their time. Παρὰμυθον also means *recreation*. Further, these fictions are founded on the old Grecian fable μύθος, into which the author has thrown a new sense and import: so much for the title.

Herder seriously recommends this new casting of Grecian fictions as an exercise of the taste and imagination of young persons. It may indeed be objected that frequent compositions of this description might diminish the reverence with which we justly contemplate these poetical fragments of ancient wisdom, and destroy the harmony and consistency of the whole. To which it may be replied, that the beauty of the Grecian mythos is inherent, and not conventional or dependent on our belief of their antiquity, and that no modern fiction could assimilate itself with them, which does not resemble them in significance and beauty. The *Paramythia* are in prose, and have no other ornament of style than that of full and well turned periods. Herder cites in vindication of simplicity of language in compositions of this sort, the elegant Greek distich—

Beauteous art thou Aglaia, embellishing  
all things around thee;

Beauteous art thou adorn'd: naked, thou'rt  
beauty itself. H.C.R.

#### 1. *Aurora*.

A troop of joyful maidens celebrated with dances and songs of praise the feast of *Aurora*. "Thou, the most beauteous and most blessed of the goddesses," they sung, "arise each morning in the beauty of endless youth, and with the hue of the rose, bathed in the spring of all delight and of the enlivening blossoms." Even as the sun arose, *Aurora* turned her team towards them, and stood before them the most beautiful but not the most blessed of the Goddesses. Tears stood in her eyes, and the misty veil which she had drawn from the earth, lay like a damp cloud on her shining and rosy coloured forehead.

"Ye children," said she, "who ho-

nour me with songs of praise, your youthful innocence has drawn me hither, that I may show myself to you as I am. Whether I am beautiful, you may see yourselves; whether I am happy, may those tears speak, which I daily shed in the lap of my sister *Flora*. In my youth I thoughtlessly united myself with the aged *Titan*, from whose arms ye behold me every morning so early hastening. As a punishment for him and me, his grey immortality is without youth, and it robs me too of beauty and splendour as long as I am by him. For this reason do I so early hasten to my short employment of driving away the shadows, and I conceal myself during the day in sun-beams, till *Titan* sees me, when he instantly drags me down into his grey bed, weeping and blushing for shame.—Take warning from me, ye maidens, nor believe that the most beautiful among ye must be the most happy, if she be not as wise as she is fair, and choose for her felicity a spouse of her own condition."

*Aurora* vanished, but her image shone again in the eyes of the maidens, in each tear-drop of the dew. They no longer celebrated her as the wisest, because she was the most beauteous of the goddesses, and they became wise through her example.

#### 2. *Flora's Choice*.

As *Jupiter* summoned before him in ideal forms, the creation he had resolved to make, he winked, and there appeared before him among others, the gaudy *Flora*. Who can describe her charms? Who can paint her beauty? All that the earth had borne in her virgin lap was collected in the stature, form, colour, and garments of *Flora*; all the gods looked upon her; all the goddesses envied her beauty.

"Choose," said *Jupiter*, "a partner from among this numerous assembly of gods and genii, but beware vain child, that thy choice do not deceive thee."

*Flora* looked with levity around; and would that she had chosen *Phœbus* who burned with love towards her! But his beauty was too high for the maiden, his passion was too silent. She cast a rapid glance a-

round her, and chose—who could have expected it?—one of the lowest of the gods, the volatile *Zephyrus*.

"Senseless!" exclaimed the father of the gods, "that thy sex even in its diviner forms should prefer each wanton and fascinating charm to a higher and more silent love. Hadst thou chosen him (pointing to *Phœbus*) thou and thy whole race had shared with him immortality. But now, enjoy thy consort." *Zephyrus* embraced her, and she vanished. As flower-dust she was lost in the region of the god of air.

As Jupiter brought the ideal forms of his world into existence, and the womb of the earth was before him, ready to bring forth into life the scattered dust; he called aloud to *Zephyrus* who slumbered over the ashes of his beloved. "Arise! arise! O youth! bring thy beloved here, and behold her earthly appearance." *Zephyrus* came and with him the now-er dust: it was at once scattered over the surface of the earth. *Phœbus* through ancient love animated it. The goddesses of the springs and streams, for sisterly affection, penetrated it. *Zephyrus* embraced it, and *Flora* appeared transformed into a thousand many-coloured budding flowers.

Each of them rejoiced as she recognised again her celestial lover and resigned herself to his wanton kiss, in his gently-waving arms. But the joy was short; as soon as the fair one had unfolded her bosom and had prepared her bridal bed in all the charms of perfume and colour: the satiated *Zephyrus* left her; and *Phœbus* who took compassion on her too kind and easily deceived love, by his consuming beam, put an early period to her sufferings.

Each spring, ye maidens, renews this history. Ye bloom like *Flora*, choose some other partner than *Zephyrus*.

### 3. *Echo*.

Do not believe it, ye children of simplicity; do not believe the poet's fable, that modest *Echo* ever solicited the vain *Narcissus*, or was ever the loquacious betrayer of her goddess. Listen to me and I will relate the true history of *Echo*.

*Harmonia*, the daughter of love, was an active assistant of Jupiter in his work of creation. With maternal tenderness she imparted to the newly formed being, a tone, a note, which penetrates into the depths of his bosom, binds his whole existence together, and connects him with all kindred beings. At length she had exhausted herself, the beneficent mother! and being by her birth but half an immortal, was forced to abandon her children. How deeply did her departure afflict her! she fell down before the throne of Jupiter and prayed:—"Powerful God! let my form vanish from before the heavenly beings, but do not annihilate my heart and my feelings, and do not separate me from those to whom I have given existence from my own bosom: let me at least be invisible among them, and participate and feel with them each tone of joy and sorrow, with which I endowed them, happy or unhappy."

"And will it ease thee," answered the god, "to feel their wretchedness invisibly, and be unable to aid them or in any way be seen by them?—This is denied thee by the irrevocable sentence of destiny."

"Let me but answer them," she replied, "let me but be able to repeat the tones which issue from their breasts, and my maternal heart will be comforted."

Jupiter touched her gently, and she became the formless and widely spread *Echo*. Wherever a tone from one of her children is heard, the heart of the mother resounds in sympathy.—With the consonance of an harmonious soul, she produces from every creature, every fraternal being, the notes of sorrow and of joy. By her the hard rock is penetrated, by her the solitary wood is animated. And how often hast thou not, thou tender mother, thou bashful inhabitant of solitude and the silent grove, exhilarated me more than the barren circle of men, from whose hearts and whose souls no tones are emitted!

### 4. *The dying Swan*.

"Must I alone be without song and dumb," said the silent *Swan*, sighing, as he bathed himself in the splendour of the setting sun; "I al-

most alone, in the whole kingdom of feathered swarms. It is not the clucking hen, or the prattling goose, or the screaming peacock, whose voice I desire; but the gentle Philomela, thee I envy when enchanted by thy magic notes, I more slowly circuit the lake, and fascinated, loiter amid the glories of the scene. How would I sing thee, thou golden evening sun, thy beauteous light and my felicity; dying, I would plunge beneath the mirror of thy rose-like forehead."

In silent rapture the Swan dived below, and as he rose again upon the surface, he beheld on the shore a shining form, which benignly invited him to approach. It was the god of the morning and evening sun, the beautiful Phœbus. "Chaste and lovely being," said he, "the prayer is granted thee, which thou hast so often nourished in thy silent breast and which could not be granted till now." He had scarcely said these words when he touched the Swan with his lyre, and tuned upon it the music of the immortals. The tones pierced with rapture the bird of Apollo, who in grateful joy and in harmony with the god of beauty, sang the beautiful sun, and the splendid sea, and his innocent and blissful life. His harmonious song was soft as his form, it lasted in slow and gently enslumbering notes till he found himself again in his true and heavenly beauty, at the foot of Apollo in Elysium. The song which was denied him in life was given him in death, it was destined gently to dissolve his corporeal limbs, for he had then heard the music of the immortals and had seen the visage of a god. He gratefully clung to the foot of Apollo, and was hearkening to his divine notes, as his faithful spouse arrived, who had in mournful strains sang herself into Elysium. The goddess of innocence adopted both as her favourites; she places them in the yoke before her car, when she bathes in the sea of youth.

Be patient, silent and hoping heart! what is denied thee in life, because thou canst not yet endure it, is given thee in the hour of thy dissolution.

##### 5. *The Lily and the Rose.*

Tell me, ye benign daughters of  
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the coarse and black soil, who gave you your beautiful form? for in truth ye have been modeled by no inelegant fingers. What tiny spirits sprang out of your calices? and what joy did ye feel as goddesses rocked themselves on your leaves? Tell me ye peaceful flowers, how did they share together the delightful employment? and how did they confer together as they spun threads so various, and wove and embroidered with such fantastic grace. But ye are silent ye children of love, and are content in silence to enjoy your existence.—Be it so; instructive fable shall teach me what your tongues conceal.

The earth stood once a naked rock; when behold, a friendly band of nymphs trod upon the virgin soil, and courteous genii offered themselves to adorn the naked rock. They divided their employment among each other. Even under snow and amid cold unseemly grasses, modest *Humility* began and wove the retiring violet. *Hope* followed her and filled with cooling vapours the little calix of the refreshing *Hyacinth*; these succeeding so well, there now came a proud and pompous train of gaudy fair ones; the tulip raised her head; the narcissus looked around with eyes languishing in vain.

Many other nymphs and goddesses busied themselves in various ways adorning the earth and triumphing over its splendid show.

And now as a larger portion of their works and their own joy over them were faded, Venus addressed the graces, "And why do you delay, sisters of joy?" said she, "arise and weave out of your charms too, a mortal and visible blossom." They descended to the earth, and Aglaia, the grace of innocence, formed the lily; Thalia and Euphrosyne weaved with sisterly hand the flower of joy and of love, the virgin rose.

Many flowers of the field and of the garden envied each other; the rose and the lily envied none and were envied by all. Sister-like they bloom together upon one stem, and adorn each other. The flower of innocence heightens the charms of the bride of love and joy: for sister graces have woven them inseparably together.

On your cheeks too, ye maidens, bloom lilies and roses; may their creators and mistresses, Innocence, Love and Joy, in like manner attend you united and inseparable.

#### 6. Sleep.

Among the innumerable Genii whom Jupiter had created to amuse and delight the short time of the laborious lives of men, was found also dark Sleep. "To what purpose am I here," said he, contemplating his own form, "amongst my more splendid and attractive brothers? How melancholy do I appear in the chorus of the sports, the joys and the wanton caprices of love! What boots it that I am desired by the unhappy, the burden of whose sufferings I take away, and whom I relieve by gentle oblivion: but as to them who never tire, who know nought of the cares of wretchedness, the circle of whose delights I only interrupt—

"Thou errest," said the father of genii and men, "in thy dark form wilt thou become the beloved genius of all mankind, for dost thou not believe that joys and sports fatigue? In reality they tire sooner than care and wretchedness, and transform themselves for the satiated in bliss, into the most wearisome satiety."

"Neither shalt thou be without delights," he continued, "thou shalt even oft surpass all thy brothers in them." With these words he presented to him the silver-grey horn of pleasant dreams. "Scatter out of this," said he, "thy seeds of slumber, and the happy as well as unhappy shall love and wish for thee more than for all thy brothers. The ethereal hopes, the loves and the joys which lie in it, have been gathered by thy sisters the graces with enchanted hand out of our most blissful gardens. The ethereal dew which shines upon them, will animate with his own wish, every one whom thou meanest to render happy; and as the goddess of love has besprinkled them with our immortal nectar; hence the delight they give to mortals will be more graceful and delicate, than all the poor realities which the earth can afford. Out of the chorus of the most blooming sports and joys, they will gladly hasten into thy arms: poets

will sing thee, and in their songs strive to imitate the enchantment of thy art: even the innocent maiden will wish for thee, and thou wilt rest on her eyes, a sweet and blissful deity."

The complaint of sleep was changed to triumphant thanks, and he was united with the most beautiful of the graces, *Pasilhea*.

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For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

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#### DESCRIPTION OF THE ORKNEY ISLANDS,

Written in Latin by Joseph Ben, a native, in the year 1529.

THE first island is *North Ronaldsay*: To the north it is on a level with the sea, and occasions frequent shipwrecks to the English and other navigators: it is about four miles in circumference, and about sixty from Kirkwall. The people are wholly ignorant of the divine truths, because they are seldom instructed. There is great plenty of grain here, particularly barley and oats. In winter the inhabitants live on barley bread, and in summer, on small fish and milk. In the northern part of the island, very large animals, called in the native language *selchis*, are caught in hempen nets; there is also a large rock called *Selchskerry*, about half a mile from land, where sea-fowl haunt, and build their nests.

In this rock the sea monsters just now mentioned mount to the top when the sea is high, but when it falls they sink into a pit, from whence they can by no means escape, for there is no passage; the peasants finding them entrapped, collect about the rock; the monsters on seeing this rush upon them open mouthed, attack them by main force, and as it were provoke them to the combat. If the first of these monsters be unhurt, all the rest fall upon the men with their teeth; but if the first be killed, the others take to flight, and are easily caught. I have seen fifty of them taken together.

They have no fuel but dried seaweeds and turf, which sends out very little light in the fire; the light which they use in winter is made of fishes' entrails; they sometimes make, however, an excellent fire of the dung of